

[1st August 2001]

RAJYA SABHA

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Wednesday, the 1st August, 2001/10 Sravana, 1923 (Saka)

The House met at eleven of the clock, Mr. Chairman
in the Chair.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Priceless Treasure found in Geesukonda, Warangal (A.P.)

*141. SHRI K. KALAVENKATA RAO: Will the Minister of TOURISM AND CULTURE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether priceless treasure has been found in Geesukonda, Warangal (A.P.) in excavation by the archaeologists;
- (b) if so, the details of ancient civilization found; and
- (c) the action taken to preserve the treasure?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM AND CULTURE (SHRI ANANTH KUMAR): (a) and (b) The Department of Archaeology and Museums, Govt, of Andhra Pradesh carried out a minor excavation and exploration at Geesukonda in district Warangal, AP, in November-December 2000. The excavation is reported to have yielded archaeological material comprising polished stone axes, iron objects, sling balls, foundation of a brick-built circular structure, terracotta figurines, beads and bangles, Satavahana and Vishnukundi coins. These finds range from Neolithic period to the 4th century A.D.

(c) As per information received from the Government of Andhra Pradesh, the excavated material has been chemically cleaned and preserved.

SHRI K. KALAVENKATA RAO: Sir, my first supplementary is this. Geesukonda excavations throw light on the ancient civilisations of Satavahana and Vishnu Kund. The archaeologists are, however, disappointed, as they could not carry out further investigations, due to paucity of funds. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether the Government of India would immediately sanction

Rs. 10 lakhs required to acquire a four-acre piece of land which is holding the treasure trove of the 1st and 4th Century A.D., for further excavation and research.

SHRI ANANTH KUMAR: Sir, Geesukonda excavations are very important excavations. The State Government of Andhra Pradesh has started the excavation work two years ago. Usually, the procedure according to the Act, is, the State concerned should seek the permission of the Union Government/the Archaeological Survey of India. But, till now, there is no application seeking permission for the excavation, from the State Government. Sir, the excavation has stopped not because of paucity of funds, but because the local *pattadars* have raised objection. And, secondly, if the State Government approaches the Archaeological Survey of India, in a proper manner, we will consider the case.

SHRI K. KALAVENKATA RAO: Sir, my second supplementary is: With the onset of monsoon, the treasure might get affected, as the owner of the land is tilling it for agricultural produce. So, the Government take steps to declare the area as a "protected area" and take action to excavate the treasure fully, at an early date, with the assistance of the Government of Andhra Pradesh?

SHRI ANANTH KUMAR: Sir, we will have correspondence with the State Government regarding this because, the State Government, *suo moto*, without even informing the Union Government and the Archaeological Survey of India, has started the excavation there. It is the first of its kind which has happened. Actually, there is the Central Advisory Board on Archaeology which has a Standing Committee, and whatever excavations are proposed to be conducted, the proposal has to go to that Standing Committee and the Standing Committee would make a list and propose the same to the DGASI, and the DGASI will take up the excavations, centrally. This is the procedure. Now, this procedure has not been followed in this case. They started the excavation work in November/December, 2000, and it has come to our notice, through an Unstarred Question, in 2001. Therefore, if there is an application, in the due format, to the Union Government, we will take up the matter.

SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE: Sir, the hon. Minister himself admitted in his reply that the materials which have been excavated there range from the Neolithic period to the 4th Century A.D. and from the archaeological point of view, these are materials in which all of us are interested. This reflects our national heritage. Therefore, the hon. Minister is correct when he says that the approval from the Standing Committee should have been obtained and that these types of excavation cannot be carried out by the State Governments because neither they have the expertise nor the resources. But, here, in this particular case, the excavations have already started. It is almost half-done. Some objections have been raised, as the hon. Minister has stated, by some *pattadars* or somebody. Therefore, may I request the hon. Minister, through you, Sir, that the Union Government should intervene in this matter to ensure that the excavations are taken to their logical conclusion? And even at this stage, they can take it over by persuading the Government of Andhra Pradesh to complete all the formalities so that the ASI, which has expertise, which has resources, can take over this excavation work. The work which has already begun should not be left halfway.

SHRI ANANTH KUMAR: Sir, I appreciate the concern of the hon. Member. As per section 4 of the Act—the power of the Central Government to declare a monument as an ancient monument—we will send the Superintendent of Archaeology to that site to gauge the importance of the site. We will take all necessary steps to protect the excavation.

डा.वाई. लक्ष्मी प्रसाद: सभापति महोदय, यह बहुत दुर्भाग्य की बात है कि राज्य सरकार के अधिकारी इस महत्वपूर्ण विषय को भारत सरकार के ध्यान में नहीं लाये। स्वयं मंत्री जी ने बताया कि यह स्टार्ड प्रश्न के माध्यम से भारत सरकार को समाचार मिला। इसलिए मैं मंत्री जी से यह जानना चाहता हूँ कि जिन राज्य सरकार के अधिकारियों ने ऐसे महत्वपूर्ण मामले को भारत सरकार के ध्यान में नहीं ला कर के अंधेरे में रखा है, उनके खिलाफ एक्शन लेने का आपके पास कोई विचार है?

SHRI ANANTH KUMAR: The only thing the Government of India proposes to do is, to continue the excavation and protect the heritage monument.

SHRI RAMA MUNI REDDY SIRIGIREDDY: Sir, there are so many ancient monuments in Andhra Pradesh. To protect them, there are only a few watchmen. So, illegal diggings are going on there in order to earn wealth. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether he is taking any specific steps in order to stop the illegal diggings. Also, recently, some pieces of Buddha statue were found in Prakasam district. Is the Government taking any specific steps in this regard?

SHRI ANANTH KUMAR: Sir, the question of the hon. Member does not purport to the main question. Yet, I assure him that if any such matter is brought to my notice, due action will be taken.

SHRI B.P. SINGHAL: Sir, a very right suggestion has come from the hon. Member. It has to be appreciated that these ancient finds are sold at very high prices in the international market. Today, the States do it clandestinely, tomorrow the private individuals will also do it. So, unless explanations are sought by the Central Government, the things are not going to stop. Then, what action has been taken against the officers who* have violated this rule? I don't think it would be proper for the Government to accept the situation just without taking any notice of this violation. Is the hon. Minister interested in seeking an explanation from the State Government that why they did not inform the Central Government?

SHRI ANANTH KUMAR: Sir, in this regard, we have written a letter to the Government of Andhra Pradesh. We have also made a reference to the Government of Andhra Pradesh regarding the violation of various sections of the Act. We have also requested the Government of Andhra Pradesh to have an investigation in the matter, and take action against the persons who are responsible for this lapse.

श्री बालकवि बैरागी: माननीय सभापति जी, जैसे कि अभी मंत्री जी ने अपने उत्तर में बताया है कि आपकी जानकारी के बगैर वहां की सरकार ने यह खुदाई शुरू कर दी और यह प्रश्न अगर नहीं आता तो शायद आपको अभी तक पता नहीं चलता। मैं माननीय मंत्री जी से पहला प्रश्न यह जानना चाहता हूं कि क्या इस तरह की केन्द्र की सरकार की उदारता बाकी सभी सरकारों पर भी लागू रहेगी? मेरा दूसरा सवाल यह है कि आखिर किसी न किसी स्तर पर आपको

विभाग का कोई न कोई पुरातत्व का बड़ा, छोटा अधिकारी वहां पर प्रदेश में तैनात रहा है और अभी भी है, उसने आपको समय पर रिपोर्ट नहीं किया तो आप उसके ऊपर क्या कार्यवाही कर रहे हैं? अन्यथा जैसे श्री सिंहल जी ने बताया कि प्राइवेट लोग खुदाई शुरू करेंगे और जब तक प्रश्न नहीं होंगे तब तक सरकार को पता नहीं चल पाएगा।

SHRI ANANTH KUMAR: Sir, actually, it is not correct that we came to know about this only through today's Starred Question. Actually, excavations had started in November-December, 2000; and, through the Superintendent of Archaeology of that circle, we came to know of it just within two months, that is, in January, 2001. Immediately, we wrote a letter to the state Government. According to the Act, if any private party or a private individual starts an excavation in protected or non protected areas of heritage importance, the Union Government can take action against them. This is the first ever case in so many years. Usually, encroachments take place, but, this excavation—I do not want to term it as illegal excavation—it will be too harsh to term it as illegal excavation—is because of the State Government not following the provisions of the Act and not informing the Union Government, in the first instance... (Interruptions)...

श्री बालकवि बैरागी: इस दिशा में आपकी स्पष्ट नीति और स्पष्ट निर्देश क्या है, कृपया आप हाउस के सामने स्पष्ट करें। क्या देश में दूसरी सरकारों पर भी आप इसको उदाहरण के तौर पर लागू रखेंगे?

श्री अनन्त कुमार: हम जरूर रखेंगे।

श्री सभापति: नहीं, नहीं, यह तो उल्टी बात है...(व्यवधान)... HE does not want this laxity which has been given to one State Government, to be given to the other States... (Interruptions)...

श्रीमती सरला माहेश्वरी: ...(व्यवधान)... यह लैक्सिटी का जमाना है ...(व्यवधान)...

SHRI ANANTH KUMAR: Actually, Sir, you did not appreciate my statement; examples can be of two ways.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, no. This question was one example ... (Interruptions)...

श्री बालकवि बैरागी: आपके संरक्षण के लिए मैं आपका आभारी हूँ। लेकिन सरकार को नीति स्पष्ट करनी चाहिए कि बगैर आपसे पूछे, बगैर आपकी जानकारी के दूसरी सरकारें भी यदि इस तरह से खुदाई शुरू कर दें तो क्या आप उनको स्वीकृति दे सकेंगे? आपके पूछे बगैर इस तरह से खुदाई शुरू करना क्या आपके नियमों के अनुकूल पड़ेगा?

श्री अनन्त कुमार: यह तो ठीक नहीं है।

DR. RAJA RAMANNA: Often, it has been said that the Archaeological Department does not have sufficient money to take up important excavations. For instance, in Nalanda, only about 10% excavation has taken place. Under the circumstances, I would like to suggest to the hon. Minister, who has just mentioned that we should not allow private bodies to take part in excavations, that with certain restrictions—just like in foreign countries—the private bodies should be encouraged to take part in excavation activities, if the Government has no money to take up very important excavations, like Nalanda, for example.

SHRI ANANTH KUMAR: Sir, I highly appreciate the suggestion made by Dr. Raja Ramanna. Actually, the Ministry of Culture has come out with a novel and unique mechanism by the name of 'National Culture Fund'. It is a special purposes vehicle through which private parties, public sector undertakings, corporate houses, educational institutions and NGOs can pool in their resources and participate in all kinds of archaeological activities, including preservation, conservation, excavation, etc. That is already there. In the last one-and-a-half years, we have mobilised nearly Rs. 40 crores for the upgradation of various monuments across the country.

SHRI T.N. CHATURVEDI: Mr. Chairman.^ Sir, I think, the officials of the concerned State Government and the officials of the Union Government pursue the same ends. But this example brings out some kind of a lack of coordination between the officials of the State Government and the officials of the Union Government. Therefore, part (a) of my question is, will the hon. Minister try to ensure that more meetings are held between the officials of the State Archaeological Departments and the officials of the Archaeological Survey of India—occasionally, they do "meet and

[1st August 2001]

RAJYA SABHA

exchange their views—so that this kind of a situation, which is not good for the Department, does not occur.

Sir, part(b) of my question is this. It has been said that the Archaeological Survey of India is really not having, at its disposal, sufficient funds either to protect the monuments as they are, or, even to continue the excavations in many other places. I know about the place that I come from, namely, Kannauj. There are a number of places which are supposed to be protected—whatever the remains now there are. But I have been told by the local people—I also went there to see it—that hardly anybody is present there to look after these monuments. Even the officers who have been posted at Agra or somewhere near these sites, probably, never visit these places. Now, my questions is: Would he like to rationalise the charges and the Circles of the Archaeological Survey of India and ensure that, for the proper protection of these monuments, sufficient funds are provided and adequate arrangements are made?

SHRI ANANTH KUMAR: As far as part(a) of the question that has been put by the hon. Member is concerned, I agree with the hon. Member, we will facilitate such a dialogue between the Union Government officials as well as the State Government officials.

Now, Sir, as far as part(b) of the question is concerned, I would like to say that last year, the total budget of the Archaeological Survey of India was Rs. 115 crores, in which Rs. 80 crores were under non-Plan and Rs. 35 crores were under Plan. Sir, the total number of centrally-protected monuments is 3606. Each monument hardly gets Rs. 7,600. So, we came out with two innovative ideas. One is to rationalise the entry fee for the ticketed monuments, and second is, to increase the number of ticketed monuments. By that rationalisation, I am happy to inform this august House that our revenue, which previously used to be Rs. 7 crores every year, has gone up to Rs. 7 crores every month. Sir, it has gone to Rs. 84-87 crores from Rs. 7 crores in one year. But, as Dr. Manmohan Singh knows, according to the principles of public finance, all the money that accrues to the Archaeological Survey of India will go to the General Exchequer and has to come back to us. Even Shri Pranab Mukherjee knows about it. But, due to our consultations with the

Finance Ministry, there is a happy situation that whatever money accrues through our ticketed monuments, we are getting that as an additionality. Secondly, there are more than 10,000 heritage monuments. Out of them, only 3606 monuments are centrally-protected, whereas the total number of heritage monuments is more than 10,000. Therefore, we require a public-private partnership to maintain and upgrade these monuments. So, we are actively pursuing the National Culture Fund. In last one year, there were about 8 corporate houses, like the IOCL. It has instituted one Indian Oil Foundation through which it has given us Rs. 25 crores and has assured us to give Rs. 10 crores every year. Sir, there are other corporate houses like the Oberoi, the Agha Khan Foundation, the Poona Municipal Corporation, the Taj Group of Hotels, the Apccjay Hotels, etc. Many of them have come forward and signed MoUs with the Archaeological Survey of India and the NCF, and are trying to upgrade various monuments across the country.

SHRI T.N. CHATURVEDI: Sir, I commend the efforts of the hon. Minister in this regard, but I would like to say that, unfortunately, the less accessible places are still being neglected. I want to draw the attention of the Minister to such places. That is where the Archaeological Survey of India should really focus its attention.

SHRI ANANTH KUMAR: I request Chaturvedi Saheb to bring in a sponsor with whom we are ready to sign an MoU.

SHRI T.N. CHATURVEDI: Sir, I am afraid, everybody in Uttar Pradesh is not as affluent as the people in Bangalore and in Mumbai are. I wish it were so.

Generation and consumption of power in the Country

*142. SHRI DIPANKAR MUKHERJEE: Will the Minister of POWER be pleased to state:

- (a) the power generation and consumption in the country during the last five years (in billing units);
- (b) the projections of the 15th Electric Power Survey (EPS) during the above period;